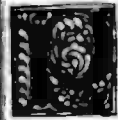


The Builder.

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REVIEW. Volumes of our journal contain accounts and notices of the Model Baths and Washhouses for the Labouring Classes, erected in Goulston-square, Whitechapel. In the fourth volume especially (p. 471) there is a description of the building; also a reply by a member of the Committee (p. 496) to some comments on the slowness of the proceedings, which we then felt it our duty to make; and in the fifth volume (p. 249) there are some further particulars. In our present number we give a plan of the establishment, a section, and some of the constructive details,* and we shall avail ourselves of the opportunity to place before our readers a variety of statistical particulars, and to strengthen the appeal that the committee are making to the public for some further assistance to enable them to complete their work.

The establishment of baths and washhouses is a matter of the utmost importance. The purification of the body is a great step towards the purification of the mind. When it was first proposed to provide the working classes with a warm bath and a clean towel for 2d., few expected that so important an experiment would succeed; but notwithstanding many difficulties, the success of the bathing establishments has been complete: they are at length self-supporting, and the number of persons using them increases steadily every month they are open.

The cost of cleanliness can now no longer be pleaded as an excuse for dirt; and no one who reflects upon the wonderful and delicate mechanism of the skin, and its susceptibility to disease, can doubt that the 500,000 baths which have been taken in the past twelve months at the Baths in Whitechapel, in St. Martin's, and in St. Marylebone,—or that the 1,000,000 which have been taken in London in the three years since the first was opened, have very much contributed to the health and comfort of those who use them, to say nothing of the social improvement and moral elevation induced.

The Parent Committee for Promoting the Establishment of Baths and Washhouses for the Labouring Classes was appointed at a public meeting, held at the Mansion-house, October 16th, 1844: the Rev. Sir Henry R. Dickinson, Bart., was chairman of the committee; Mr. William Hawes chairman of the committee of works; and Mr. James Farish and Mr. John Bullar were the honorary secretaries. The committee was established to promote the health, cleanliness, comfort, and improvement of the industrious classes, and its duties were twofold,—1stly, to promote the establishment, as generally as possible, of public baths and washhouses; and, 2ndly, to erect and open for use, in London, an establishment of baths and washhouses, the plans and construction of which should be so carried out as to render it serviceable, not only for the industrious classes in the neighbour-

hood, but also for imitation universally as a model establishment.

The benefits to be expected are those which result from the improvement of the condition of the labouring classes. In all crowded cities and towns the labouring classes are exposed to much evil, from being compelled to endure, and so being gradually habituated to, an amount of personal and domestic dirt, which tends to moral degradation as well as to the loss of health. The main object of these establishments is to enable the labouring classes to escape from that evil, by bringing within their reach those means of cleanliness which they could not otherwise enjoy. Let us see what the committee have already done.

Their proceedings have led to the establishment of seven institutions besides the Model Establishment, namely,—one in George-street, Euston-square; one in the parish of St. Martin-in-the-Fields; one in Marylebone; one in Westminster; one in the parish of St. James, Piccadilly; one at Greenwich; and one at Poplar: also to the establishment of similar institutions in Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, Norwich, Hull, Preston, Oxford, Wolverhampton, Macclesfield, Nottingham, Bolton, Worcester, York, Exeter, Hereford, Chester, Plymouth, Sunderland, Newcastle, Carlisle, Coventry, Belfast, Waterford, and other places. The number of bathers at the four establishments in London already exceeds 1,155,000; and the number of women who have washed and dried the clothes of themselves and families, amounts to no less than 215,000. The fact has been established that warm and cold baths, and the means of washing and drying linen, can be profitably provided for the working classes, at prices so low, and with conveniences so great, as to place these necessary means of health within the reach of all but absolute paupers. The committee have circulated in all parts of the kingdom the results of their experience. They actively promoted the passing of the Act of Parliament (drawn gratuitously by a member of the committee) to enable boroughs and parishes to erect public baths and wash-houses. They have provided plans and information to promote the erection of similar establishments in foreign countries, and have reason to believe that, through their exertions, the city of London now enjoys the credit, not only throughout almost the whole of Europe as well as the United States and other parts of America, but also in other parts of the globe, of having taken an effective lead in promoting the general establishment of these important institutions.*

So much then having been effected by the committee—by the aid of their supporters—they may justly look for some further help, not to defray the current expenses of the establishment, for it is now self-supporting, but to enable them to bring it to that state of completion which is required to meet the wants of the very poor neighbourhood in which it is placed.

All that they require to increase the number of tubs from 44 to 98, is 700*l.* With this sum,

* As an evidence of the success abroad of the exertions of the committee, it may perhaps be sufficient to state that, in consequence of a report made to the French Government by a commission appointed in November 1849, after an examination of the model and other establishments in England, a grant by the authorities is about to be made of twelve sines for public baths and wash-houses in Paris, with a gratuitous supply of water to each.

this large establishment, with 44 double wash-tubs, ironing-boards, drying chambers, and 98 first and second class men's and women's baths—the first projected in London—that upon which the construction and arrangement of all others, of any importance, have been based—will be complete; and whereas, in ten months of the past year, nearly 75,000 persons have been supplied with clean linen, and in twelve months, nearly 140,000 people have been bathed, there can be no doubt that in the next twelve months nearly 200,000 will be supplied with warm baths and towels at an average cost of 3d. each; and, supposing the washhouse completed, as proposed, that 400,000 men, women, and children, or 80,000 families, will owe to its conveniences and cheapness, clean and pure linen, at an average cost of one half-penny per week for each person—a cheapness obtained without recourse to public assistance by annual subscriptions. This sum is now only required to finish the works, built in about equal proportions, with capital borrowed at interest on mortgage and upon personal security, and by voluntary subscriptions.

The total outlay, up to this time, has been 30,023*l.* The building, machinery, steam-engine, boilers, tanks, baths, wash-tubs, drying apparatus, gas and water fittings, &c., cost 19,756*l.* 6s. 3d. The engineer's commission on works executed, clerk of works, surveyor's charges, and fees to official referees, &c., 1,474*l.* 17s. 3d. The furniture, towels, bath fittings, tools, and utensils, cost 650*l.* 10s. The experimental works incidental to the erection of the first establishment of baths and washhouses on a large scale, for ventilating apparatus, drying apparatus, mode of supplying water to the baths, &c., necessary to attain the most economical arrangement and the minimum annual cost for working expenses, are estimated at 1,500*l.* The expenditure has been much greater than was expected, and (as we cannot help thinking) greater than it ought to have been. The committee themselves admit it; but they plead that they have been working for the general question, and that money will be saved, not only here, but in foreign countries, by means of their expenditure. Even were it not so, however, the fact that a large part of the money raised has been provided by members of the committee themselves would suffice to stop further comment on this head.

There must be no such expenditure in other places, nor is it likely that there will be: some of the other establishments, erected with the benefit of the committee's experience, are now paying 7½ and even 10 per cent.

An establishment may be erected at a cost of from 2,000*l.* up to 5,000*l.* With reference to the smaller sum, it can either be expended in a building complete in itself, or in a portion of one, to give afterwards double or treble accommodation. If, in all probability, the town will not eventually require a larger building than could be constructed for 2,000*l.*, it would be well to expend the money in a complete building in the first instance; but if, on the contrary, increase is to be looked for, then part of a building should be erected, to be added to as the habits of bathing and washing become developed, bearing in mind that the machinery, in the first instance, be suited for the building when increased to its full extent.

It is not so much the first cost which is to be looked at as the after expenses, consequent upon the building not being erected in a sub-

* See pp. 89 and 90.